**PRESS RELEASE**

**Monday, 4th January, 2016**

**Zeeko Digital Trend Report Confirms Primary Schoolchildren are Interacting With Strangers Online And Have Experienced Cyberbullying**

**ZEEKO Launches Crowdfunding Campaign for Internet Safety Guide**

Zeeko an Irish Start Up based at Nova UCD works to educate parents to teach their children to stay safe online. Zeeko, today, Monday, 4th January, announced results of its Digital Trend Report in which 17% of children in first class report interacting with strangers online. Zeeko is also launching a crowdfunding campaign today, with a target of raising €5,000 for its Internet Safety Guide for parents and educators, a digital copy of which will be distributed to all 3,300 schools in Ireland in 2016.

Zeeko was set up in 2013 by Joe Kenny, an entrepreneur and a parent concerned about the lack of attention being given to the growing dominance of the internet in children’s lives. With backing from Enterprise Ireland and personal funding, Joe established Zeeko to provide training and education to parents and educators in schools to help protect children as they explore the digital world.

In 2015, Zeeko visited over 45 schools across Ireland providing training for children, parents and teachers and surveyed 2,200 children about their online activities. The results of this work form the basis of the Digital Trend Report which Zeeko is launching today.

Highlights from the Digital Trend Report include:

* Confirmation that hand held tablets are a more popular device used by students between 1st and 6th class than smartphones, laptops, consoles or ipods
* 67% of children in 3rd class access the internet, play games online and use apps from a tablet as opposed to 42% using a laptop or desktop
* 50% of children in 5th class have one or two hours a day “screen time” and over 30% of first and second class children are spending 1 – 2 hours a day in front of screens.
* IOS devices are more popular than Android amongst all age groups.
* When asked “if they had ever been cyberbullied or experienced cyberbullying happening to people around them” a worrying 26% of 2nd class students and 34% of sixth class students said they either had or knew someone who had been cyberbullied. 15% of first class children, 26% of third class children, 24% of fourth class children and 23% of 5th class children said they had been cyberbullied or knew someone who had been cyberbullied.
* Over 54% of sixth class students have admitted to speaking to a stranger online.

Speaking in relation to the Digital Trend Report, Joe Kenny, said

“Some of the results of this report indicate that children as young as six and seven are creating their own online digital relationships by interacting with strangers online. This should be of concern to parents and educators. The internet is a great resource and has enormous potential in the education setting as we know, however, there are also many risks online especially for children. As mobile devices and powerful hand held computers become more available and less expensive it is becoming more difficult for parents to restrict access. Many parents tell us that their children have apps or are using social media sites without their consent. Our advice to parents is that the best thing they can do is teach children how to navigate the internet safely. The feedback from parents attending our seminars is very positive. Parents are looking for information and guidance in this area.”

Dr Grainne Kirwan, Department of Learning Sciences, Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT), said:

"Online activities such as social media and gaming have been found to have many benefits for young people, including enhancement of interpersonal relationships and social interaction, expression of identity, enhanced self-esteem, self-affirmation, leadership skills, cognitive benefits, and many more. However, there are also many negative issues which can arise in online environments, such as, cyberbullying. In my experience in over 13 years of researching online activities this is an area where great care must be taken in developing responses and policy, and while a blanket ban on online activities might seem to be an appropriate and straightforward solution, many young people will find ways of accessing what is forbidden to them. In reality the internet is so much a part of daily life now, it will soon be impossible for parents to restrict access to it. Parents and educators need to guide children on how to behave in online environments to reduce risk, and provide support for their problems and questions. This is no different from the guidance children receive in the offline world where rules are well established for managing risky behaviours, for example, crossing the road, learning how to drive, or cycling in traffic.

The Zeeko Internet Safety Guide provides tangible and specific advice on how parents, teachers, and others can protect children online. The guide advocates an open communication between parents and children, and provides specific suggestions on how to manage this. Any parent who is concerned about their child's online safety should read this guide," she concluded.

Speaking in relation to the Zeeko crowdfunding campaign being launched today to fund the publication of the Zeeko Internet Safety Guide for parents and teachers, Mr Kenny said;

“We are asking people to back our campaign to get a digital copy of the guide into every primary school in Ireland. We need to raise €5,000 to do this. Those who contribute €15.00 or more will receive a printed version of the guide. We need as many people as possible to back our campaign via social media to get the word out about our Guide!”

Full details about Zeeko and the Digital Trend Report are available on [www.zeeko.ie](http://www.zeeko.ie) or on any of the links below.

Information on the crowdfunding campaign is available on <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/zeeko/zeeko-internet-safety-guide>



**Ends**

**For reference**

**Marie-Therese Culligan**

**PR Strategy Ltd**

**087 2367008**